

Lincoln Boyhood

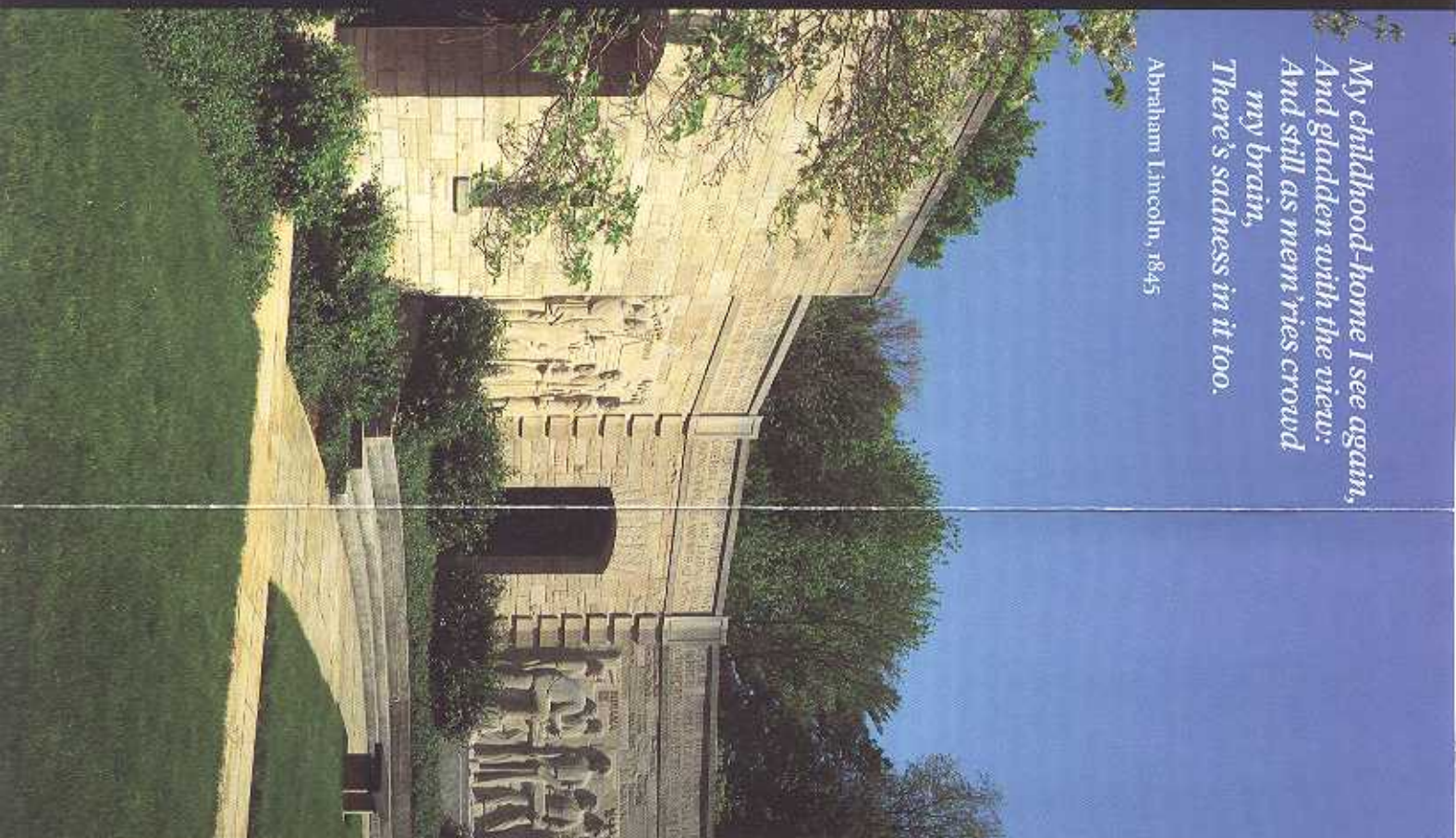
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Memorial
Indiana



*My childhood-home I see again,
And gladden with the news:
And still as memories crowd
my brain,
There's sadness in it too.*

Abraham Lincoln, 1845



"There I Grew Up"

My father...removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in my eighth year. We reached our new home about the same time the State came into the Union.

Abraham Lincoln, revered among the greatest Americans, was shaped in large measure by his years in Indiana. The people he knew here and the things he experienced stayed with him throughout his life. His sense of honesty, his pursuit of education and learning, his respect for hard work, his compassion, and his notions of right and wrong were born of this place and time.

In the fall of 1816 Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln packed their belongings and two children—Sarah, age nine, and Abraham, age seven—and left their Kentucky home bound for the new frontier of southern Indiana. Arriving at his 160-acre claim near the Little Pigeon Creek in December, Thomas quickly set about building a cabin and carving a new life from the "wild region," as Abraham once described the largely unsettled Indiana woodlands.

In much of the work Thomas was assisted by his son. As he grew

older, Abraham increased in his skill with the plow and, especially, the axe. He later recalled how he "was almost constantly handling that most useful instrument."

All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother. God bless her.

For the first two years here, life was good for the Lincolns. In the fall of 1818, when Abraham was nine, Nancy Hanks Lincoln went to tend to some neighbors ill with milk sickness and herself became a victim. It was a tragic event for the family, and the first of many losses Abraham would endure over his lifetime. Thomas and Abraham made a rough wooden coffin for her burial, and the family said their last farewells to their beloved wife and mother.

Within a year Thomas made a visit to Kentucky, where he married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow he had known for many years. Sarah brought into the household her three children, aged 12, 8, and 5, a wagonload of furniture, and many books. Sarah proved to be a kind stepmother. Under her love and guidance, the two families became one.



This earliest known portrait of Abraham Lincoln was made in 1846. Lincoln served as the 16th U.S. President, 1861-65.

There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education.

In frontier Indiana, opportunities for formal education were few—and there was endless farm work to be done. Abraham's time spent in classrooms totalled about one year. By all accounts, he loved to



Thomas Lincoln
Lincoln Memorial University



Sarah Bush Lincoln
Indiana State Historical Society



Lincoln's Indiana school papers, plow, and pioneer-axe. Far left: Memorial Visitor Center. Right: 1846 axe—Curtis Peck; plow—Henry Ford Museum

"The Milksick"

read and could often be seen carrying a book as well as his axe. By age 16 Abraham was tall and muscular with a keen intellect.

Joining in informal political discussions at Gentry's store, Abraham honed his debating skills. In 1828 Abraham got a job piloting a flatboat loaded with produce down the Mississippi and Ohio rivers to New Orleans. There he witnessed a slave auction on the docks, an experience that greatly disturbed him—and that he would never forget.

Two years later, the Lincoln family left for Illinois, where Abraham spent his next 30 years. After President Lincoln's assassination in 1865, the Indiana home site became a place to honor both him and his mother. The memorial building, constructed in the 1940s, represents an era when the creation of memorial edifices and landscapes was a popular way to express the Nation's reverence for its 16th President. The memorial was administered by the state of Indiana until 1962, when Congress established Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial.

The park preserves our most tangible link to Lincoln's childhood and youth, the place where he worked side by side with his father, mourned the loss of his mother, read the books that opened his mind, and grew from a boy to a man.

Milk sickness occurs when cattle graze on the white snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*), a shade-loving plant that grows throughout the Ohio River Valley. The plant contains the toxin tremetol, poison to animals—and to humans who consume the milk products or meat of those animals.

Symptoms in humans range from nausea and vomiting to coma and death. The disease is rarely a problem

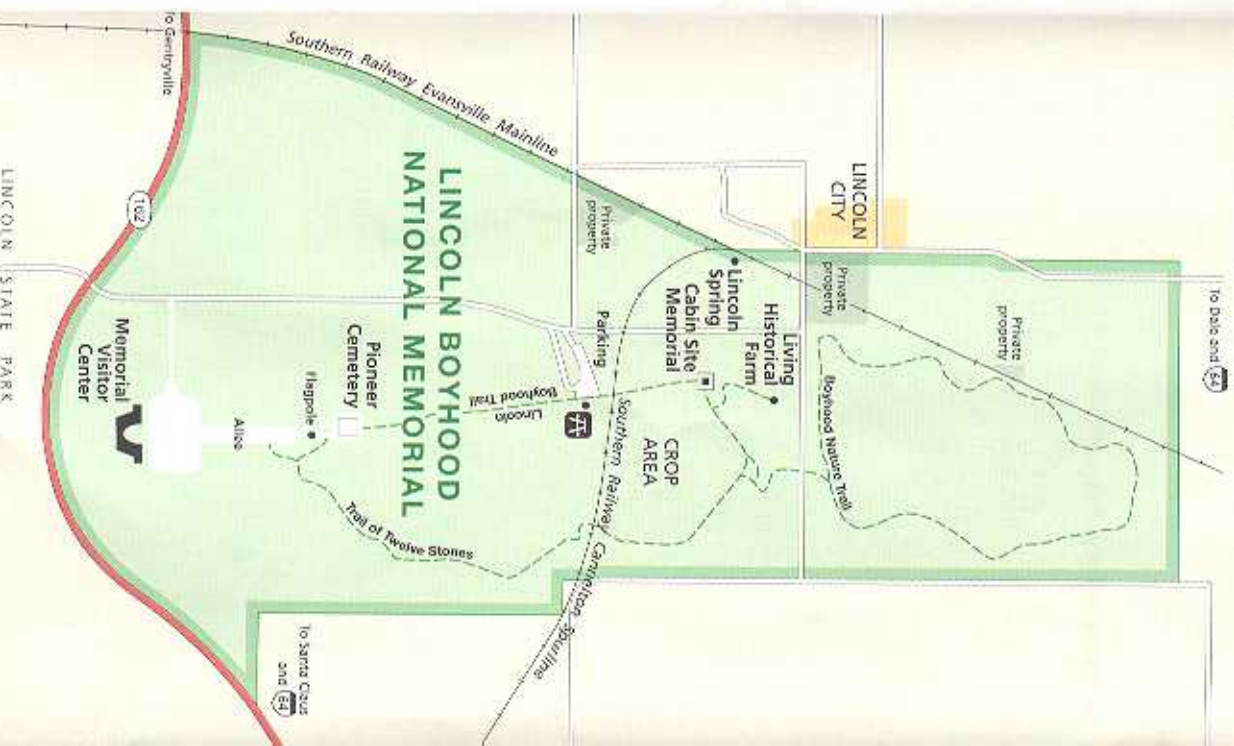
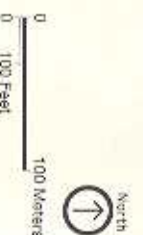


White snakeroot

DAH ArtBlossom Researchers, Inc.

today, but in early 19th-century Indiana, "the milksick" was the scourge of frontier settlements. According to reports, more than half the deaths that occurred at the time in Dubois County, Indiana, resulted from milk sickness.

In the fall of 1818 milk sickness broke out in the Little Pigeon Creek settlement. Several of the Lincolns' neighbors succumbed to the disease, and in late September Nancy Hanks Lincoln fell ill. She died on October 5 and was buried on a wooded knoll one quarter mile south of their cabin.



Exploring Lincoln Boyhood

The Living Historical Farm

This re-created 1820s homestead occupies four of the original 160 acres owned by Thomas Lincoln. A cabin, and outbuildings that date from the 19th century were moved from elsewhere in Indiana and reassembled on this site. There are also split-rail fences, livestock, vegetable and herb gardens, and field crops. Park rangers in period clothing demonstrate farm life with historic implements and agricultural techniques. The farm area is open from mid-April through September. From October through mid-April the buildings are closed and are not staffed. However, visitors may still visit the farm grounds and browse about the area.

The Crop Area The first spring the Lincolns were in Indiana they put in six acres of corn, the preferred crop because of its many uses for humans and livestock. The corn they raised grew to heights of 15 to 18 feet. Beans were planted in the corn rows

so vines could climb on the corn stalks. Few farmers in southern Indiana raised wheat for market because of the inconvenience and expense of having it milled, but they usually sowed enough for their own use. They also grew oats for feed, as well as flax and cotton for making fabric.



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Besides raising crops, every frontier family kept a vegetable garden. We don't know exactly what was in the Lincoln's kitchen garden, but common vegetables were potatoes, turnips, gourds, beans, cucumbers, melons, asparagus, cabbage, onions, broom-corn for making brooms, and herbs for preservatives. Pumpkin was as popular with the farm animals as it was with the people. It was stewed, fried, eaten raw, and made into molasses and pies. "Punkin leather," a great favorite with children, was small dried strips of pumpkin rolled into balls.



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Living history interpreters feed chickens (above left), make shingles (left), and do other farm tasks.

Planning Your Visit

Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is just outside Lincoln City, Indiana. From I-64, take exit 57. Go south on U.S. 231 to Gentryville. Turn left (east) on Ind. 162; go two miles to the park entrance on the left.

The park is open year-round, except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. A fee is charged. There are picnic tables at the farm area parking lot. Picnic, camping, and recreation facilities are available in nearby Lincoln State Park.

Stop first at the Memorial Visitor Center, which has an information desk, a brief film, a bookstore, and museum exhibits. On the outside walls are sculptured panels, carved from Indiana limestone, that depict places where Lincoln lived. The quotations above them are from Lincoln's own speeches.

Pioneer Cemetery Abraham's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died of milk sickness in 1818 and was buried on this hill. Her exact burial place is unknown, but there is a memorial grave marker visible from the trail. The cemetery is also



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Detail from relief sculpture panel, Memorial Visitor Center.

the resting place of others in the Little Pigeon Creek community.

Cabin Site Memorial A bronze casting of sill logs and fireplace hearthstones symbolizes a cabin that the Lincolns began building in 1829.

Trails The Lincoln Boyhood

Trail connects the Pioneer Cemetery to the Living Historical Farm. The Trail of Twelve Stones begins at the Living Historical Farm and ends near the grave site. The two trails form a loop of about one mile. The Boyhood Nature Trail loops one mile through the woods north of the Living Historical Farm.

Lincoln Spring The spring was the main source of fresh water for the Lincolns. Its presence was probably one of the reasons that Thomas Lincoln chose this home site.

A headstone of Italian marble commemorates the life of Nancy Hanks Lincoln. Her exact burial site is not known.

For a Safe Visit Please stay on established trails. • The railroad line near the farm parking area is still in use. Be careful crossing the tracks. • Take precautions against insect bites and poison ivy. • The park is generally accessible to persons in wheelchairs. Portions of the trails are slippery when wet.

More Information Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. Visit www.nps.gov to learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities.

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